TRING RESERVOIRS

The perfect day out for all the family

Tring Reservoirs are a fantastic place to search for our canal heritage, spot wildlife, watch narrowboats or enjoy a stroll in lovely scenery. There are a variety of local cafés, pubs and facilities.

Three circular 'Tring Reservoir Trails' will help you to explore. Look out for the distinctive British Waterways plaques and the green, red and yellow waymarkers. The plaques display a helpful "You are here" map and an interesting fact to discover on each!

The One and Only

The only staircase lock on the Grand Union Canal is at the start of the Aylesbury Arm Canal. It is different from a normal lock in that the bottom gate of one lock forms the top gate of the next.

Fishermen's Tales

The Reservoirs are also a fishery, managed by The Tring Park Estate. Wilstone, Marsworth and Startop's End Reservoirs are fished for carp, roach, tench, pike, bream and catfish, whilst Tringford Reservoir is managed as a trout fishery.

One of the biggest fish to be caught here was a catfish that measured 1.69 metres (5½ feet long)!

Tring Reservoir Trails

- 5¾ miles
- 3 miles
- 2½ miles
- Disabled Access
- Locks
- Bird Hide
- Information
- Reedbeds
- Pubs
- Beware of Traffic
- Picnic & BBQ Area

Aylesbury Arm Canal

This 6¼ mile long canal, with its basin at Aylesbury, was built to carry timber, grain, dairy produce, building materials and coal. The basin also attracted emigrants seeking transport through the canal network to the Port of Liverpool, where they joined ships bound for America.

Bulbourne Workshops

For over 100 years (until 2004) these workshops built lock gates for the canals in the southern region. Every lock gate is different and must be carefully measured to make sure it fits tightly in the lock.

Restoration in Progress

The Wendover Arm Canal was designed as a narrow water feeder to carry water from the hills near Wendover to the Grand Junction Canal. However, the merchants, millers and farmers of Wendover saw its value as a trade link to London so it was built as a navigable canal.

In 1904, following a long history of leakage, the canal beyond Tringford Pumping Station was closed to boat traffic and the spring water diverted into Wilstone Reservoir. In 1989 the Wendover Arm Trust was formed to restore it to navigation. You can see this work in progress if you follow the yellow 'Tring Reservoir Trail'.

Bushell Bros. Boatyard

Narrowboats that carried grain to New Mill were built and repaired at an adjacent boatyard between 1850 and 1952. One of the highlights of the Bushell Bros' business was the construction of 'Progress', an experimental wide beam motor boat for use on the Grand Union Canal.

Tringford Pumping Station

– the heart of the water supply network

The original 1818 pumping station, which housed a Boulton and Watt steam pump, had a second storey and a tall brick chimney. These were demolished in 1927, after electric pumps were installed to replace the steam pump, and run alongside diesel electric pumps dating from 1911.

You can hear the pumps when they are running, raising the reservoir water from deep wells beneath the building.

New Mill

Flour milling has a long tradition beside the Wendover Arm Canal. Narrowboats brought imported wheat from London Docks and returned carrying sacks of flour to bakeries in Chelsea and Fulham.

The original windmill was demolished in 1911, but some of the older buildings are still used for flour milling today.

Lock Gate Facts

- Wooden gates were made of unseasoned oak from the Welsh borders.
- The timber must be kept damp to prevent it from splitting.
- It took around 10 days to make a lock gate at Bulbourne Workshops.
- Wooden lock gates last for at least 25 years.

Marsworth clay was used to make thousands of bricks to line locks along the Grand Junction Canal.

Buckinghamshire farmer, John Westcar, won first prize with his ox at the Smithfield fat stock show in 1799. The ox enjoyed a leisurely boat trip by canal to reach the show and didn't lose an ounce of weight along the way!

Wooden lock gates constructed at Bulbourne Workshops were stuck together with a glue called 'beetle resin'.

A large scale model of the Foxton Inclined Plane was constructed at Bulbourne Workshops in 1896 to test the design. This invention lifted narrowboats up ramps by steam engine to bypass the 10 locks at Foxton.